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THE  
ANNUAL REPORT  
OF THE  
MEDICAL OFFICER  
OF HEALTH  
FOR THE  
URBAN DISTRICT OF  
NORTHAM  
FOR THE YEAR  
1955



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# Annual Report, 1955

## 1.—STATISTICS AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS OF THE AREA.

AREA—4,391 acres.

POPULATION—Estimated residents 6,630.

Number of inhabited houses at end of 1955 according to the rate books, 2231.

Rateable value, £43,706.

Sum represented by a penny rate, £175.

### **Social and Physical Conditions.**

The District is divided into four wards for the purpose of election to the Urban Council. Appledore returning 5 members, Northam 4, Westward Ho! 4, and Orchard Hill 3.

Appledore has shipbuilding and repairing yards, which employ a large number of hands, and is a favourite sea fishing centre. Northam, Westward Ho! and Orchard Hill wards are chiefly residential, Westward Ho! being a popular seaside resort. Sand Yachts are in use on the sands at Westward Ho!

The well-known championship links of the Royal North Devon Golf Club are situated on Northam Burrows, and attract a large number of visitors during the year.

Under the name of Kipling Tors, a hillside overlooking Bideford Bay and situated in the south-western area of Westward Ho! has recently been purchased as part of a Kipling Memorial and handed over to the National Trust. This land is about 18 acres in extent, and is a welcome addition to the free beauties of the district.

## 2.—VITAL STATISTICS IN 1955.

### **Births and Birth Rate.**

The total live births in the District was 80, of which 47 were boys and 33 girls.

There were no still births registered.

The live birth rate per 1,000 of the population was 12.06, that for England and Wales being 15.0.

The still birth rate per 1,000 was nil, that for England and Wales being 23.1.

### **Deaths and Death Rate.**

The total deaths were 72, (39 males and 33 females), 4 males and 15 females were over 80 years of age, and 1 male and 3 females were over 90 years of age.

The death rate per 1,000 of the population was 10.5, that for England and Wales being 11.7.

There were no deaths of infants under 1 year.

That for England and Wales being 24.9 per 1,000 live births.

There were no deaths of infants under 4 weeks of age.

The following Table gives the cause of death in the District during 1955.

Causes				Male	Female
1.	Tuberculosis, respiratory	...	...	—	—
2.	Tuberculosis, other	...	...	—	—
3.	Syphilitic disease	...	...	—	—
4.	Diphtheria	...	...	—	—
5.	Whooping Cough	...	...	—	—
6.	Meningococcal infections	...	...	—	—
7.	Acute Poliomyelitis	...	...	—	—
8.	Measles	...	...	—	—
9.	Other infective and parasitic diseases	...	...	—	—
10.	Malignant neoplasm, stomach	...	...	2	—
11.	Malignant neoplasm, lung, bronchus	...	...	1	—
12.	Malignant neoplasm, breast	...	...	—	1
13.	Malignant neoplasm uterus	...	...	—	1
14.	Other malignant and lymphatic neoplasms	...	...	3	2
15.	Leukaemia, aleukaemia	...	...	—	—
16.	Diabetes	...	...	—	—
17.	Vascular lesions of nervous system	...	...	4	4
18.	Coronary disease, angina	...	...	11	4
19.	Hypertension, with heart disease	...	...	1	1
20.	Other heart disease	...	...	10	12
21.	Other circulatory disease	...	...	—	2
22.	Influenza	...	...	—	1
23.	Pneumonia	...	...	—	0
24.	Bronchitis	...	...	1	0
25.	Other diseases of respiratory system	...	...	—	—
26.	Ulcer of stomach and duodenum	...	...	—	—
27.	Gastritis, enteritis and diarrhoea	...	...	—	1
28.	Nephritis and nephrosis	...	...	—	—
29.	Hyperplasia of prostate	...	...	—	—
30.	Pregnancy, childbirth, abortion	...	...	—	—
31.	Congenital malformations	...	...	2	0
32.	Other defined and ill-defined diseases	...	...	3	1
33.	Motor vehicle accidents	...	...	—	—
34.	All other accidents	...	...	1	1
35.	Suicide	...	...	—	2
36.	Homicide and operations of war	...	...	—	—
ALL CAUSES				39	33

There were no deaths from Measles, or other infectious diseases of children.

### 3.—GENERAL PROVISION OF HEALTH SERVICES IN THE AREA.

#### (1)—Public Health Officers of the Authority.

There are two Public Health Officers of the Council—the Medical Officer of Health, and the Sanitary Inspector. The Council's Surveyor is also the Water Engineer.

#### (2)—Nursing Arrangements in Area.

The nursing arrangements are covered by two fully qualified Nurses who also act as Midwives. One is responsible for Appledore



and Westward Ho! area, the other for Northam. Their work is of a high standard, and there is full co-operation with the General Practitioners of the district.

**(3)—Hospitals.**

The District is provided for by the Bideford and District Hospital. The Hospital is available for Medical and Surgical cases and contains 51 beds, with specialist services available at clinics held in the Hospital.

The Isolation Hospital, now called The Kingsley Hospital, situated at East-the-Water, Bideford, provides for infectious cases from the whole of North Devon, and was completed in 1935.

**(4)—Ambulances.**

The Ambulance Service is under the control of the National Health Service. An up-to-date Motor Ambulance is kept for Bideford and District for non-infectious cases and an Ambulance is kept at the Isolation Hospital for the use of cases using that Hospital.

**(5)—Clinics and Treatment Centres.**

A treatment centre for Venereal Disease and a Tuberculosis Dispensary are available at Barnstaple for Northam District, Tuberculous patients are admitted to Hawley and Hawkmoor Sanatoria. The treatment of Tuberculous patients is controlled by the Tuberculous officer at Barnstaple who conducts a comprehensive follow up scheme for all patients and contacts.

An orthopaedic clinic is now held at Bideford Hospital. There is now one Resident Children's Nursery in the district.

**(6)—Ante-natal and Post-natal Care.**

Ante-natal and post-natal clinics are conducted by each General Practitioner in the area in co-operation with the midwives. Specialist facilities are available at Barnstaple.

**(7)—Blind Persons.**

The number of registered blind persons in Northam U.D.C. is 19 : Cause of disability : Cataract, 7; Glaucoma, 4; Optic Atrophy 5 and other causes 3. There were no cases of Ophthalmia neonatorum notified during 1955.

## **4.—SANITARY CIRCUMSTANCES IN THE AREA.**

### **Northam Water Supply.**

The Water supply is derived from a reservoir draining a large tract of moorland at Melbury, situated in Parkham parish and about nine miles from Northam. There is also augmentation of the water supply by pumping from the upper reaches of the Torridge at Kismeldon. A scheme to increase the capacity of the reservoir was completed in 1942, adding another 10 million gallons to the former storage capacity of about 40 millions. The average monthly use of water in 1955 was 8,474,00 gallons. There was no restriction in supply during 1955. Regular bacteriological and chemical tests for purity, by the Public Analyst, have always proved entirely satisfactory. Simple daily tests by the Water Engineer have also proved satisfactory.

### **Rainfall for 1954.**

Rainfall measurements are made at Melbury Waterworks (500 feet above sea-level) and at the Royal North Devon Golf Club (sea-level). The figures for 1955 were as follows : Melbury Waterworks 41.21 inches, Royal North Devon Golf Club 29.91 inches. The highest monthly rainfall at Melbury was 8.53 inches in December and at the Golf Club 5.68 inches in December. The lowest monthly rainfall at Melbury was 0.26 inches in August and at the Golf Club 0.04 inches in August.

Comparable figures for 1954 were Melbury Waterworks 60.58 inches. Royal North Devon Golf Club 34.58 inches. The wettest months were November with 10.19 inches at Melbury Waterworks and 7.27 inches at the Royal North Devon Golf Club in November. The driest month was April with 1.24 inches at Melbury Waterworks and 0.32 inches at the Golf Course in April.

There is main drainage discharging at Rocks Nose, Westward Ho! which is covered at low water. The only river affected by sewage is tidal and is only used by a few houses in Appledore, which are too low to be connected with the main drainage.

(a) During the year the Sanitary Inspector made numerous inspections of a sanitary nature. Complaints of nuisance were all remedied after serving of informal notices.

(b) There are four Elementary Schools in the District. All were inspected and found to be in a satisfactory condition.

## **5.—INSPECTION AND SUPERVISION OF FOOD.**

### **Milk Supply.**

There are 27 registered dairymen in the District, 25 producers and 2 retailers. Samples of milk were taken for examination and analysis.

Any samples which failed to pass the tests were reported on, and further samples in each case were passed as satisfactory.

Inspections of cowsheds were made and any defective conditions remedied.

### **Bakehouses.**

There are 6 Bakehouses in the District. All were inspected and found satisfactory.

### **Slaughterhouses.**

Five slaughterhouses have been re-opened in the district. They have been inspected regularly and found to be satisfactory. All carcasses are inspected after notice.

## **6.—HOUSING.**

There were 23 new Council houses and bungalows completed in the district and 22 built by private enterprise.

Several houses were inspected under the Housing Acts or Public Health regulations. There was no action taken under statutory powers during the year. Disinfection of rooms was carried out where necessary.

## 7.—PREVENTION AND CONTROL OVER INFECTIOUS DISEASES.

During the year 13 cases of Measles, 2 new cases of Pulmonary Tuberculosis and 5 cases of Scarlet Fever were notified.

Since the institution of the National Health Service diphtheria immunisation is carried out by general practitioners and at the child welfare centres and school clinics.

The cleansing and disinfection of infected rooms is carried out by the Sanitary Inspector, and in cases where the bedding of necessitous cases has to be destroyed, the Council gives reasonable compensation.

No action was taken during the year under the Public Health (Prevention of Tuberculosis) Regulations, or under Section 62 of the Public Health Act, 1935.

